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No. CCCXLI.

FRENCH'S MINOR DRAMA.

THE ACTING EDITION.

THE ALUMNI PLAY

A farce in One Act.

BY

CLARA HARRIET SHERWOOD.

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NEW YORK:

T. H. FRENCH,
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PUBLISHER,
28 WEST 23D STREET.

LONDON:

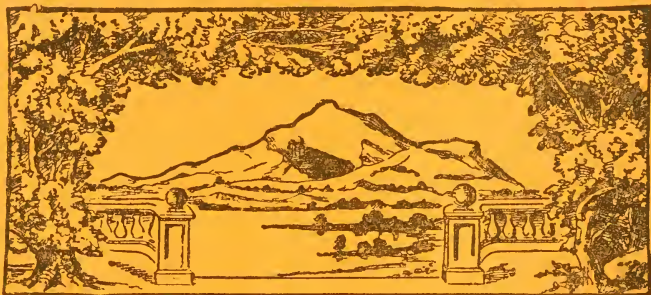
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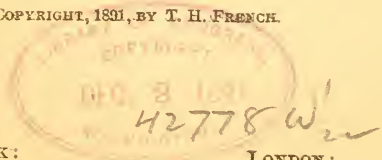
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THE ALUMNI PLAY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MISS ETHEL ORDWAY.

MISS BESSIE NOBLE.

MR. JOHN NOBLE.

MARY, THE MAID.

MODERN COSTUMES.

TMP96-006795

THE ALUMNI PLAY.

(FARCE—IN ONE ACT.)

SCENE.—MISS NOBLE'S library.

[*Mary draws portiere, and MISS ORDWAY enters, in street costume.*]

MISS ETHEL ORDWAY. Mary, tell Miss Bessie that I have come on important business—*very important*—and I'm in a hurry. Tell her it's the *Alumni* business—you understand?

MARY. Yes, Miss.

Ethel. *Alumni business!* (*With a sigh.*) She will know what *that* means. [Exit MARY.]

ETHEL. (*Wanders about the room. Takes up book from the table. Reads title*) "The World as Will and Idea."—"Schopenhauer." (*Makes a wry face.*) What delightful reading for a warm day! From Mr. Dudley, of course. Bess will wade dutifully through it. (*Weighs the book between her hands.*) Fancy!—Deliver me from a pedantic fiancé! (*Discovers a photograph on the table.*) Oh! what a perfectly splendid photograph of Jack! (*Seizes it eagerly.*)

[Enter MARY.]

MARY. Miss Bessie will be down in a moment, Miss.

ETHEL. (*Starts guiltily, and puts photograph behind her.*) O!—O, very well, Mary, I wish she would hurry. (*With entire change of expression she once more examines photograph, as MARY makes her exit.*) It doesn't exactly do him justice. (*Sees hat and cane on a chair.*) Why, there is his hat—and cane! I wonder if he is at home to-day. (*Flies to mirror and adjusts her hat and veil.*) I am literally blown to pieces. (*Pauses, with a sudden thought.*) Perhaps it isn't his hat, after all. (*Examines the hat.*) Yes, yes it is, and—what's this? *my card in it?* (*Reads.*) "Miss Ethel Ordway." (*Smiles.*) How absurd! What *can* he have wanted with my card? Wearing it in his hat, too. (*Laughs delightedly. She turns the card over, and her expression changes.*) Oh! Oh, I see! Jane Owens' address is on the other side. Wrote it myself. Now, do you suppose he wanted her address? (*Pauses.*) I don't believe it!

[Enter MISS NOBLE, in morning gown, carrying a bandbox.]

MISS BESSIE NOBLE. Good-morning, dear.

ETHEL. (*Putting card in her pocket.*) Good-morning, Bess. (*Kisses her.*) What in the world have you in that box?

BESSIE. Properties.

ETHEL. Your property?

BESSIE. No, no. Properties for the play. I thought you came on Alumni business.

ETHEL. (*With a sigh.*) O, so I did! You see you were so long coming that I forgot what I came for. I—I became so interested in your Schopenhauer.

BESSIE. (*Laughing.*) You featherbrain! If the world were according to *your* will and idea, we would be walking about on our heads.

ETHEL. Now, that is unkind of you. On the contrary, I was having very delightful ideas indeed, Bess. I will be first bridesmaid. Behold me, distractingly beautiful in a white gown! You are a vision under a tulle veil—Can't you hear the wedding march? (*Sings.*) *tum—tum—ta—tee!* (*Marches solemnly across the room, dragging her friend with her.*)

BESS. O Ethel! How ridiculous!

ETHEL. *Ridiculous?* But wait—Afterwards the bridal party partake of a delicious repast; the groom rises to his feet (*dramatically*) and proposes a toast to—to—let me see—to the Differentiation of the Homogeneous, or something equally comprehensible—to which the bride responds with whole pages diligently culled from Herbert Spencer. It is a feast of reason and a flow of soul. *Now*, what have you got to say against my ideas?

BESS. That they are too absurd.

ETHEL. Well, if you prefer to “toddle away with beat of drum and rum tum-tum,” of course I have no objection.

BESS. Here, here! That will do! To business! Remember, you are on the Executive Committee.

ETHEL. (*Faints into a chair. Then, resignedly.*) Too true! Bess, I've heard of people being *executed*, but somehow the full horror of the term never dawned upon me until I was put on this *Executive Committee!*

BESS. (*Smiling.*) But, since you are on it, you must do your duty. You have been delegated to the *Entertainment Committee*.

ETHEL. *Relegated*, you mean.

BESS. (*Laughing.*) Don't quibble over a term. You have promised to serve on this committee, Ethel Ordway, and you've got to help me. Now *do* be serious.

ETHEL. (*Straightening up and assuming a great interest.*) Very well, I am all attention. You say you have the properties in that box. Does it not occur to you, my dear Elizabeth, that you somewhat resemble the Peterkins? Getting your properties before we have decided on the play?

BESSIE. The play is what we *must* decide upon.

ETHEL. (*Tragically.*) “The play's the thing!”

BESSIE. And I'm afraid we shall have to get a play without any male characters in it.

ETHEL. Without any men in it?

BESSIE. I am afraid so.

ETHEL. O, but, Bess—think how horrid! *Why* can't we? Dear me, it is hard enough to find a short play for amateurs, but a play with only women in the caste! I can't think of anything more stupid.

BESSIE. You see the trouble is, none of the girls are willing to take a man's part.

ETHEL. Why not?

BESSIE. I have used every inducement, but they *will not* dress the part. They all say they can see no harm in it themselves—but—they are afraid of criticism. That is the amount of it.

ETHEL. And who would criticise them? Nobody. Why the audience is composed of women—that is, *nearly*. And the idea! In these days of Jenness Miller and divided skirts! It is too absurd!

BESSIE. I think so, too. And besides, they could disguise themselves completely with these wigs and beards. (*Opens bandbox.*)

ETHEL. (*Eagerly.*) O, do let me see! (*They take out beards and wigs. ETHEL puts one on BESS.*) How would you look? (*Bursts out laughing.*) The bearded lady! (*Assuming the air of a showman.*) Walk in, gentlemen, *only* ten cents to see this wonderful curiosity! Never will such an opportunity be afforded you. Walk in! We have here—

BESSIE. (*Interrupting.*) A monkey in disguise. A living proof of the authenticity of Mr. Darwin's theory (*pointing at ETHEL. Then, examining her face in the mirror.*) But, really, Ethel, I would look look a man if it were not for my hair and clothes.

ETHEL. Certainly, you would. And why any girl should object to doing it is more than I can understand.

BESSIE. Suppose *you* do it.

ETHEL. I! O—I—I— You see I'm too small.

BESSIE. (*Laughing.*) You see?

ETHEL. If I were larger, I'd do it. Why don't *you*?

BESSIE. *Never!* I couldn't possibly.

ETHEL. Isn't it in keeping with Mr. Dudley's principles of sociology? I think you act more in accordance with *his* will and ideas than you do with what's-his-name-over here? (*looks at book*) Schopenhauer.

BESSIE. That has nothing to do with it. I simply could not act like a man. I can't act, in the first place. You know I have no histrionic talent whatever; and to act a man's part—it is out of the question.

Ethel. Well, then, if you can't get any one else— No. Before I make any rash promises I will go over to Mrs. Wilcox's for a lot of "yellow-back" plays, which we can look over. And if—mark you, *if* any male part suits my peculiar style of—shall I say beauty?—then I promise to take that part.

BESSIE. That will be splendid! You are a trifle small. But then there are plenty of small men.

ETHEL. O, yes! and they always fall in love with big girls. But, I must go after the plays. Dear—dear! what a lot of trouble we take for these "sweet girl graduates."

BESSIE. Of course, Ethel, we needn't have a play. We can have a musicale or a promenade concert, if you say so.

ETHEL. *Never!* They had a promenade concert the year I graduated, and excuse me from another. It was ghastly! We knew so

few of the Alumni that we sat whispering in corners, or promenaded in droves, feeling very conspicuous in our white gowns, and clinging to one another for support. Ugh! It gives me the shivers to think of it! No, indeed, the poor little dears shall not suffer like that again. Not while I am Lord High Executive Committee, and Chancellor of entertainment. Even if I have to exhibit you as the bearded lady, and myself as—what is that rude thing you called me? Darwin's missing link?

BESSIE. (*Laughing.*) You will not be called upon to betray yourself for the "little dears" as you call them. They would rise up and denounce you in a body, if they could hear you. Do you remember when we graduated?

ETHEL. (*Putting her hand to her forehead, and making a great effort to remember.*) It seems to me I have an indistinct recollection of that occasion. Was it fifty or a hundred years ago?

BESSIE. I wouldn't make myself out quite so antediluvian if I were you. I remember a certain young person who thought herself quite advanced in years at that time, and who told me, in confidence, that if she were not married within a year after leaving school, she would certainly be an old maid.

ETHEL. Well, hasn't my prediction come true? I have no predilection for Spencer and—and what-do-you-call him Schopenmyer. My remembrance of our graduation is a mixture of white mull, dreary essays, a sea of upturned faces and diplomas. The flowers and the lunch are more distinct—and the Promenade Concert! (*Makes a face.*)

BESSIE. Stop this ancient history. Run along and get the books.

ETHEL. Very well. (*With stagy gesture.*) "I go, but I return!" (*Disappears, and appears again.*) O, by the way, Bess, is your—did I—O, nothing.

BESSIE. What it it?

ETHEL. Ah—is that—is that Mr. Dudley's hat?

BESSIE. No, certainly not. Where did you suppose *he* was, under the table?

ETHEL. I—I didn't know. Whose is it then?

BESSIE. Why Jack's, of course. I should think *you* ought to know it.

ETHEL. Has he—has he more than one hat?

BESSIE. I guess so, why?

ETHEL. I—O, I just thought that if he had only one—

BESSIE. Do you want him to lend you one for the play?

ETHEL. (*Brightening.*) Yes, yes.

BESSIE. I'll ask him. (*Calls.*) Jack!

ETHEL. (*With evident relief.*) He is at home, then?

BESSIE. (*With a significant knowing look.*) Yes, he has a headache, or something. Nothing serious.

ETHEL. You needn't call him. I must go. I'll ask him about—about the hat when I come back. [*Exit.*]

BESSIE. (*Picks up wigs and beards, combs and replaces them one by one.*) Mr. Dudley's hat. (*Laughs softly.*) That was it, was it?

Voice from the hall. (*Calling.*) Bess, I say Bess!

[*Mr. JOHN NOBLE puts his head through the portiere.*]

BESSIE. Well?

MR. JOHN NOBLE. Was that Ethel who just went out?

BESSIE. You are as bad as she is, Jack. You know it was. She pretended not to recognize your hat.

JACK. (*With a drawl.*) Indeed? So I judged.

BESSIE. (*Scathingly.*) *Listening*, of course.

JACK. Well, I did happen to hear a few words about a play as I was passing through the hall—and, I say, you can't go dressing up in men's clothes.

BESSIE. (*Crossly.*) Who's going to?

JACK. Well, *somebody* is; and it's not necessary. I have a scheme for you.

BESSIE. Ah! indeed!

JACK. Got a riding skirt?

BESSIE. There's an old one hanging in the closet under the stairs. (*JACK disappears.*) Now, what is he going to do, I wonder.

JACK. (*In the distance.*) Did you say under the stairs. It's not here. O, yes, it is. I've got it. All right. How does this thing work?

[*Enter JACK, dressed in a loose silk shirt and blazer (or sacque coat) and a riding skirt, which he is trying to fasten at the belt.*]

BESSIE. (*Scornfully.*) Is *that* your scheme? How flat!

JACK. Not at all. This would do very nicely. I don't look like a woman, just because I have on a riding skirt.

BESSIE. And I wouldn't look like a man just because I had on a coat and vest.

JACK. I don't see why not—if you have a good make up. Now, see! (*Takes up his hat and cane, and strides across the room.*)

BESSIE. (*Laughing.*) O Jack! You look too idiotic!

JACK. I wager Ethel won't think so.

BESSIE. (*Sarcastically.*) Indeed? Perhaps she is a better judge than I. She will be back presently, and you can ask her opinion.

JACK. (*Who has been searching in his hat.*) I say! have you seen a card with Miss Owens'—Jane Owens' address on it? (*Looks around the floor.*) I had it here in my hat. Did you take it?

BESSIE. Did I take it? What would *I* want with Jane Owens' address. You know I don't like her, and neither does Ethel.

JACK. Doesn't like her? Then what the deuce did she invite her here for?

BESSIE. She didn't know her then as she does now. What you men found so attractive in that girl is more than I can see. In the first place, she has no brains——

JACK. (*Seating himself on a corner of the table.*) Oh! Poor thing!

BESSIE. And how a man of any intelligence whatever could find anything interesting in her——

JACK. (*Tantalizingly.*) O, by the way, Dudley was quite the devoted, don't you know.

BESSIE. (*Hotly.*) You needn't talk! You were around there every night. Besides, Mr. Dudley didn't like her at all. I am sure of it. And anyway, I don't see what you want her address for. You had better not ask Ethel for it. *She hates her.*

JACK. (*Smilingly.*) You girls are so confoundedly jealous.

BESSIE. (*Angrily.*) And you men are so abominably conceited and—and——

JACK. (*Complacently.*) Go on.

BESSIE. Well, I don't care! If I did some of the things Jane Owens does, you would take my head off. It is all very well to talk about brothers being so particular about their sisters. I, for one, do not believe in their solicitude one bit. You know me so well that any piece of flirtation or affectation on my part *disgusts* you, while in Miss Owens it is "too attractive for anything."

JACK. (*Applauding.*) Hear! Hear! Speech by Miss Noble! (*Changing his tone.*) You needn't get so excited, Bess; I was only in fun about Dudley.

BESSIE. (*Furiously.*) I don't care whether you were in fun or not.

JACK. (*Ironically.*) I know you don't, Bess. *Of course* you don't care, but the fact remains the same. He told me Jane Owens was a woman deplorably deficient of intellectuality—and I agree with him.

BESSIE. Did he *really* say that?

JACK. He really did.

BESSIE. (*Rising.*) Well, when Ethel comes, call me, will you?

JACK. (*Immediately.*) I say, Bess——

BESSIE. (*Turning back.*) Well?

JACK. (*Significantly.*) I see you are reading Schopenhauer.

BESSIE. You horrid boy. (*Runs out of the room.*)

JACK. (*Calling after her, as he picks up one book after another.*) And Schelling and Fichte, and Hegel, and—and—whew! *Kant!*

BESSIE. (*In the distance.*) I can't hear you.

JACK. (*After a moment, springs from the table, and strides across the room.*) I'll take off this toggery. (*Works at the hooks and eyes in vain.*) No, I'll wait till she comes. (*Panses.*) Just my luck to lose that address. I wish Miss Owens and her ring were in—in—Europe. Well, here goes. I suppose I've got to write. (*Sits down at table.*) I will get Ethel to give me the address, and she shall never suspect that I want it. (*Takes up pen, and stabs viciously at the ink.*) This must be formal—very formal. (*Pauses and bites his pen handle.*) Hum—I am not fluent this morning. (*Reads aloud.*) "My dear Miss Owens: I hereby return your ring." (*Pauses. Chews pen once more. Stabs at the ink.*)

[*Enter MISS ETHEL ORDWAY.*]

ETHEL. Ah! How you startled me! (*Drops several of the books she carries. Jack springs to assist her.*)

ETHEL. (*Laughing.*) What—what in the world——

JACK. (*Looks mystified for a moment, and then laughs.*) O, my gown! I was just illustrating my idea for your play to Bess.

ETHEL. (*Laughing.*) What do you mean?

JACK. Bess says it is impossible to get any of the girls to appear in

masculine dress, so I suggest this compromise. How do you like it? (*Prances before her.*)

ETHEL. How awfully funny! But I see what you mean. The girl would simply have to wear a man's coat and waistcoat.

JACK. Precisely.

ETHEL. (*Enthusiastically.*) And a wig and beard. What a perfectly splendid idea! How clever of you to think of it.

JACK. For instance, you might don my coat.

ETHEL. Do let's see if it would fit. (*Throws off hat and wrap. Jack pulls off his coat, and she turns while he helps her into it.*) How did you ever happen to think of it?

JACK. Pure inspiration.

ETHEL. There! (*Thrusting her hands in her pockets.*) Do I look very like a man?

JACK. H-m, well, I can't conscientiously say that you do just now.

ETHEL. (*Pulling the box of wigs from beneath the table.*) Of course I don't yet—but wait till I have donned my wig and beard. (*Jack comes to her assistance.*) Which do you think is the most becoming, a full beard (*putting one to her face*) or side whiskers? (*Holding them to her cheeks.*)

JACK. O, the side whiskers, by all means. And a red wig, or a white one?

ETHEL. (*Sentimentally.*) "There are wiglets white, there are wiglets red; which shall I choose to wreath my head?"

JACK. Take a white one, I beg. You are sure to fly into a temper in a red one. (*Ethel puts on a white wig, much too large, and turns towards him.*)

JACK. Gad! What a venerable old party you are!

ETHEL. (*In a sepulchral voice.*) "You are old, Father William, the young man said, and your hair has become very white."

JACK. (*Absent-mindedly.*) "And yet you persistently stand on your head"——

ETHEL. Stop! stop right here! That makes the second aspersion cast upon my brains in this house to-day. I call a red wig to my rescue. (*Puts one on.*) Now!

JACK. O, horrors!

ETHEL. (*Having put on the side whiskers.*) Down on your knees and sue for pardon! Down! Down, I say! (*One side whisker falls off.*)

JACK. (*Kneeling, speaks in a timid voice.*) Please, sir, stay the hand that smites. And, sir, if I might be allowed to remark it, sir, you—you are losing your beard, sir.

ETHEL. (*Puts her hand to her face and laughs heartily.*) O, the maiden disarms the ruffian with a smile. (*Trying to replace the side-whisker.*) This will not stay on.

JACK. Let me (*fixes it, taking some time.*)

ETHEL. There. (*Moves away.*)

JACK. Wait, wait! Now, you've spoiled the whole thing. It would have been on then if you hadn't moved.

ETHEL. Well—hurry.

JACK. (*At last, very gently.*) There you are.

ETHEL. (*A little embarrassed.*) Now—now, if I'm to take the part

of a man, you must show me how to walk, a very stylish, manly walk, you know.

JACK. All right. (*Puts hat on his head, takes cane, and walks across the room.*)

ETHEL. Gracious! Must I walk like that?

JACK. Just so. (*Walks back again, while she watches him closely.*)

ETHEL. Must I walk—must I turn my toes in like that?

JACK. Certainly you must point one foot *in*, if you want to be very English.

ETHEL. Is that the way *you* walk?

JACK. Something like that, now, let me see you do it. (*ETHEL puts on his hat, takes his cane, and walks in a painstaking, but very faulty imitation of his manner. JACK falls into a chair, convulsed with laughter.*)

ETHEL. (*Laughing, too.*) What's the matter? Don't I do it right?

JACK. (*Between laughs.*) I—I—O, I should give a fortune to be present at the—the play. It will be what is commonly called a—a roaring farce!

ETHEL. That is very unkind of you. With a little practice I am sure I could manage it. (*She tries it once more, while JACK again indulges in silent convulsions.*) Well, suppose *you* try to walk like a woman, since you are so critical. There is my hat, and here is my wrap.

JACK. (*Putting them on.*) O, that is easily done. (*Mimes across the stage several times.*)

ETHEL. (*Laughing.*) O, you do look too funny! and you walk exactly like Jane Owens. It is a capital imitation.

JACK. (*Aside.*) Jane Owens! Now is my chance. (*Aloud, very nonchalantly.*) O, by the way, ah—how *is* Miss Owens?

ETHEL. (*Indifferently.*) Very well, I dare say.

JACK. Heard from her lately?

ETHEL. (*Looks at him sharply. His back is turned as he pulls a thread from the riding skirt. Aside.*) He *did* want this address. (*Producing card.*) Well (*defiantly*) he shan't have it! (*Aloud.*) Yes, a week or so ago. (*Saunters toward table.*) When did you have *this* taken? (*Picks up photograph.*)

JACK. (*With a frown.*) The other day. I—(*his face suddenly brightens*) I saw Miss Owens picture in Guerin's window—not a bad likeness. Had it taken before she left, I suppose. Is she in Philadelphia, now?

ETHEL. (*With a significant glance.*) I believe so. Mr. Dudley's photograph is there, too. What a handsome man he is. (*Maliciously.*)

JACK. (*Aside.*) Confound it! How she does change the subject! (*Pulls at his moustache.*)

ETHEL. (*Moving behind desk.*) And so clever. (*Suddenly her eyes fall upon the open letter, which she cannot help reading, while an expression of horror crosses her face.*)

JACK. He was rather devoted to your—a—friend, was he not?

ETHEL. (*Moving quickly away.*) To whom do you refer?

JACK. Mr. Dudley.

ETHEL. (*Very coldly.*) Devoted to whom?

JACK. Why, to Miss—Miss Owens.

ETHEL. (*Scily.*) O, was he?

JACK. (*Turns toward her as she stands immovable by the table.*) Gad! What's the matter?

ETHEL. Nothing at all, Mr. Noble. You want Miss Owens address. Here it is. (*Gives him the card.*)

JACK. (*Aside.*) By jove! The card from my hat! (*Aloud.*) Where did you get this?

ETHEL. I—(*hesitates, then defiantly*) I found it on the floor, No doubt it is yours; you have evidently lost it.

JACK. (*Aside.*) Whew-w! (*Aloud.*) I—I assure you it is not mine. See! it is one of your own cards.

ETHEL. (*Sarcastically.*) Indeed?

JACK. You—you must have dropped it yourself.

ETHEL. (*Indignantly.*) How *can* you talk so! I'm sure it is nothing to me whether you want her address or not. I do not care in the least. But why should you take the trouble to conceal the fact that it is yours, when you know it was *in your own hat*? I detest deceit!

JACK. I thought you found the card on the floor.

ETHEL. What does it matter *where* I found it? The fact remains the same that you have deceived me.

JACK. (*Whistles noiselessly.*)

ETHEL. (*More calmly.*) You know that you are in love with her.

JACK. Pardon me, I know nothing of the sort.

ETHEL. (*Exasperated.*) I have a perfect contempt for a man who is ashamed of his love. The man who loves *me*—

JACK. (*Turning suddenly.*) Is ready to proclaim it to the whole world! I love you, Ethel—I have *always* loved you, and you know it!

ETHEL. (*Mimicking his manner.*) Pardon me, I know nothing of the sort.

JACK. (*With impatient shrug.*) Then you are very obtuse. Everyone else knows it.

ETHEL. (*Pouting.*) Besides, what do I care for the affection of a man who falls in love with every pretty face he sees?

JACK. (*Tenderly.*) I only see *one* pretty face, dearest.

ETHEL. (*Coldly.*) Miss Owens, I suppose.

JACK. (*Striding to her side, tragically.*) Ethel, this thing is becoming ridiculous! I cannot bear this Owens creature, and was only civil to her because she was your guest. Do you believe me? I tell you I *detest* her. (*ETHEL'S eyes inadvertently fall to the sheet of paper. His eyes follow the direction of hers. He hesitates and his voice resumes its natural tone.*) Oh! I see!

ETHEL. (*Tapping her foot, impatiently.*) Now, what am I to think of all your fine phrases?

JACK. (*Aside.*) Jove! I wish I could think of some more. (*Pulls moustache.*) Ethel, circumstances are against me. I will tell the exact truth.

ETHEL. As a last resort.

JACK. You know the day we all went skating? I—well—that is *she*—

ETHEL. *You proposed.* Go on.

JACK. Nothing of the sort. *She* proposed—

ETHEL. (*Turning upon him.*) Jack, I know there are but few conventional lines which Jane Owens would not gladly overstep, and I hate to doubt your veracity—but that *she* proposed to *you*. *No*. Human credulity has its limits.

JACK. Proposed that we should skate around the point together.

ETHEL. *Oh!*

JACK. Then she said her ring hurt her, and wanted me to take it.

ETHEL. *Ah!*

JACK. I didn't want to. I tried to get out of it. But she *made* me.

ETHEL. Poor little fellow!

JACK. Well, hang it all! What could I do? You had gone off with that Boston idiot!

ETHEL. You will kindly do me the favor to speak more respectfully of my friends. At least let me think that there is *one* among them who is not an idiot.

JACK. (*Fiercely.*) Then it is as I suspected. You *do* care for him? (*Pause.*) I have been a *fool!* (*Long pause.*) Well, I will not reproach you. What good would it do? It could not make *me* feel any better. I believed once that you were not indifferent to me. I was even mad enough to hope that some day—well, never mind. People never die of broken hearts, they say. He is no doubt a much better fellow than I, Ethel, but—but he will never love you as I do. (*Her back is turned toward him, but he lifts her hand to his lips sorrowfully, and moves away.*)

ETHEL. (*Who has been undergoing a visible mental struggle, softly.*) Jack! (*He doesn't hear. She turns.*) Jack—Jack!

JACK. (*Rushes back, and taking her in his arms.*) My darling!
(*Pause.*)

ETHEL. (*With her face buried on his shoulder.*) And you really thought I liked *him*?

JACK. And you really thought I liked *her*?

ETHEL. (*Lifting her head from his shoulder.*) Promise not to be angry if I tell you something?

JACK. I *swear* it!

ETHEL. Well, then, no. I didn't think you really cared for Jane Owens at all. I—I knew you loved *me* all the time.

JACK. (*Kissing her between words.*) You deceitful base creature!

ETHEL. (*After a pause.*) And how funny that *you* should think I cared for *him*. (*Jack smiles guiltily.*) Jack! (*A sudden suspicion dawns upon her.*) You really *did* think so—didn't you?

JACK. Promise not to be angry if I tell you something?

ETHEL. (*Doubtfully.*) I won't promise.

JACK. Then I shall never—*never* tell you.

ETHEL. H'm—a well, I promise.

JACK. Very well, then. *No*, I didn't really think so at all. I knew you loved me all the time.

ETHEL. (*Trying to get away.*) You horrid, conceited man!

JACK. Now, sweetheart, you promised not to mind.

ETHEL. But such deceit as yours.

JACK. How about yours?

ETHEL. Anyway, you can't tell whether I love you *now*, or not.

JACK. (*Laughing.*) Can't I? Then suppose you tell me.

ETHEL. I do——

JACK. Do what? Go on.

ETHEL. Do lo—lo—no, I shan't say it.

JACK. Then I take it for granted. (*Draws her closer to him, and kisses her again and again.*)

[*Enter MISS BESSIE NOBLE. She sees the fantastic couple, and pauses in alarm.*]

BESSIE. (*At last, aside.*) For Heaven's sake! (*Draws nearer, and finally bursts into peals of laughter, The two fly apart guiltily, while BESSIE continues to laugh immoderately.*)

BESSIE. (*Gasps.*) What—what— (*ends in laughter.*)

JACK. (*Seriously unconscious of his ludicrous appearance.*) That's all right, Bess. You think you have a good joke on us, but—but Ethel—a—has promised to—a—to— You see we're engaged.

BESSIE. (*Shrieking with laughter.*) Oh! Oh! O—(*JACK and ETHEL look at one another in amazement.*) Your—your—Oh! can't you see how funny you are in—in those clothes. (*Laughs again. JACK and ETHEL look at one another sheepishly for a moment, and then all three laugh.*)

ETHEL. (*At last.*) You see we—we dressed up and then—I forgot all about it. (*Rushes to mirror and exclaims in horror.*) O, how hideous! (*Snatches off the wig.*) Jack, why didn't you tell me?

JACK. I wasn't thinking about your looks.

BESSIE. (*Taking her brother's hand.*) Well, sister Jack, I congratulate you. (*Takes ETHEL by the side whiskers and kisses her.*) And brother Ethel, I salute you as a future member of our noble household.

ETHEL. Let me take off these things. (*JACK comes to assist her.*)

BESSIE. Now, you can both see how absurd these costumes are. The question is, *what* are we going to do for THE ALUMNI PLAY?

(CURTAIN.)

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